

ROLL CALL Around the Hill

News and
personalities
in the Capitol
community

MONDAY, MARCH 15, 2004

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Climbers

By John McArdle
ROLL CALL STAFF

Fair Trade in Equality State. With Chief of Staff Chris Jahn leaving to take over as president of the Contract Services Association of America, Sen. Craig Thomas (R-Wyo.) announced last week that longtime staffer Shawn Whitman would take over the top office position.

After graduating from the University of Wyoming, Whitman began his tenure in Thomas' office in 1995 as a press intern. Over the years, Whitman moved up in the Senator's legislative shop and became senior legislative assistant in 2001

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Norton Will Introduce Commuter Tax Bill

By John McArdle
ROLL CALL STAFF

Following a U.S. District Court judge's dismissal last week of a lawsuit aimed at ending the Congressional ban on a District commuter tax, Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.) said she will introduce a bill that would find an alternative Congressional solution to allow the tax.

Norton said late last week in a statement that she believes the bill she plans to introduce will be bolstered by arguments made by the Virginia and Maryland governments during the case — specifically that the District's structural imbalance needs a federal solution. She said she will encourage District lawyers to appeal their case while she moves forward with her bill.

"This lawsuit has been a wake-up call to the region, as their briefs show, that it is time for Uncle Sam to meet his responsibility to his own Nation's Capital," the statement said.

Norton Chief of Staff Julia Hudson said the Congresswoman plans to drop the bill sometime in the next few weeks.

The commuter-tax ban has been in effect since 1973, when Congress enacted a statute providing that the District City Council "shall have no authority to ... impose any tax on the whole or any portion of the personal income ... of any individual not a resident of the District."

In their case, District lawyers charged that the Congressional ban prohibiting the city from enacting a commuter tax was a discrimination case. They argued that if the ban was lifted, the District could collect on

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Texas Rep. Lamar Smith shows off his office's new electronic guest book.

Chris Maddalon/Roll Call

High-Tech Howdy Rep. Lamar Smith's Office Unveils Electronic Guest Book

By John McArdle
ROLL CALL STAFF

While visitors to every other Congressional office probably brush off their encounters with Members' guest books during visits to Capitol Hill, Rep. Lamar Smith's (R-Texas) sign-in process has become a state-of-the-art event these days.

The curvy metallic machine placed outside Smith's door sits in sharp contrast to the traditional wooden stands and paper guest books that greet visitors everywhere else on Capitol Hill — mainly because Smith's guest book actually does greet people.

Last month, Smith replaced his old, paper-and-pen guest book with an interactive, ultra-modern, electronic guest book. The new touch-screen, talking machine not only records names and information about the Congressman's guests but also provides visitors with a wealth of other useful information.

"We've gone from low-tech to high-tech," Smith said

See GUEST BOOK, page 26

Members, Students Play the Market

By Elizabeth Brotherton
ROLL CALL STAFF

Fourteen Members of Congress have signed up as sponsors for a nationwide high school competition that teaches students about the stock market through hands-on experience.

The Capitol Hill Challenge, run by the Securities Industry Association, will put 14 teams of students from schools in Members' home districts in competition with each other for a grand prize trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with their Member of Congress.

"More people are investing than ever before and the market has become an asset for millions of Americans," Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mich.), one of the program's sponsors, said in a statement. "This challenge gives kids the opportunity to have some fun while learning how they can take more control over their own future."

The program "helps instill an understanding of saving and investment and helps [students] get a basic understanding of the value of their money," said Gloria Talamas, vice president of the foundation for investor edu-

cation for the Securities Industry Association.

The Capitol Hill Challenge is a first-of-its-kind competition using the curriculum from the Stock Market Game, a stock market-simulation program teachers have used across the country since 1977.

In the game, students are placed in teams and given the task of theoretically investing \$100,000 in the stock market over a 10-week period. At the end of the 10th week, the team with the highest equity portfolio wins.

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E-Book Offers Photos, Newsletters

GUEST BOOK, from page 25

with a smile and a hint of pride in his voice as he waved his hand down the hallway toward the doorways of some of his fellow Members.

The \$5,800 machine — which was purchased from Bethesda, Md.-based Volpone Productions — allows visitors to sign up for newsletters, get notification of town meetings back in Texas, view a constituent photo album and brush up on Smith's biography before they enter his office.

"You sign in but you do more than sign in. It saves tremendously on staff time and effort," Smith said before adding with a laugh, "it also occupies constituents who get here too early."

Other features of the electronic guest book include video tours of the Capitol, White House, Supreme Court and Lincoln Memor-

ial. It also boasts "a little provincialism," including information about Smith's home district and histories on two Texas heroes whose statues appear in the Capitol — Sam Houston and Stephen Austin.

"It's the Cliff's Notes version of how to see the sights of the Capitol," Smith said. "If they don't take the hour tour, at least they'll have a mini-introduction here."

Smith said the machine has gone over well with constituents, and sometimes his staffers even have to pull visitors away from the guest book in order to get them into meetings on time.

Smith, who is chairman of the Judiciary subcommittee on courts, the Internet and intellectual property as well as a member of the Science Committee, said his office purchased the electronic guest book as a way to show-

case new technology development. The Central Texas-based Congressman has been very active in pushing technology legislation, recently sponsoring two bills — one on patents and the other on cooperative research enhancement — which have appeared on the House floor in the past few weeks.

Smith said that since he began using the new guest book fellow Members have asked him about it, and he thinks it might begin to catch on in other offices.

"It's the first of its kind on the Hill. It takes care of a lot of tasks that we would end up doing ourselves," Smith said, adding that being rid of the old paper guest books shows his office is forward-looking and high-tech oriented. Also, "sometimes we couldn't read people's handwriting," he said.

Students Competing for Trip to D.C.

STOCK MARKET, from page 25

Camp and fellow Reps. Richard Baker (R-La.), Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), John Boehner (R-Ohio), Tom DeLay (R-Texas), Melissa Hart (R-Pa.), Ruben Hinojosa (D-Texas), Darlene Hooley (D-Ore.), Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), Mark Kennedy (R-Minn.), Carolyn McCarthy (D-N.Y.), Jim McCrery (R-La.), Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and John Tanner (D-Tenn.) are all sponsors for the competition.

The Members will hopefully make visits to the classes participating in the project, Talamas said.

Jody Pyle, a teacher at Nixa High School in Nixa, Mo., uses the Stock Market Game as part of her curriculum for her introductory business class. Students react positively to the program because it gives them an opportunity to do hands-on work with subject matter that is often dry, Pyle said.

"It's just an opportunity for them to get involved in stocks and what they're about without risking any money," she said. "I have kids coming out wanting to be brokers, and I have kids coming out never wanting to put a pen-

ny in the stock market."

When Pyle's students were offered the opportunity to take part in the Capitol Hill Challenge, they jumped at the chance, she said.

At the start of each class, students "immediately come in and turn the computers on and check their stocks," Pyle said. "They really do get excited about it."

This sort of student response is typical of what Talamas said she hears from teachers across the country. "It's exciting," she said. "It really motivates them, and they are so energized they end up buying the stocks they know."

Pyle, who has used the program for nine years, said the program truly gives students a head start to understanding how the financial world works.

"I have students come out and actually go invest in either mutual funds or students who work for a corporation like Wal-Mart and they have profit-sharing options," she said. "It's very real."

Students who are seen as underachieving in school often excel in the program because it provides them with a new outlet to learn, Talamas said.

"The kids that didn't apply themselves as well felt that they could really compete with the smart kids because you start out on a [level] playing field," Talamas said.

The program sends teachers specific curriculum guides, lesson plans, an online simulation program and weekly newsletters for use in their lessons. Some use these options more than others.

Pyle said she gives the students investment tips, teaches them ways to use the Internet for resources and has an investment representative talk to them about stock options.

"What we do stress to them is that when you

are trying to make money over a 10-week period you invest differently," she said. "You don't take as much risk as if you're really investing."

Despite its praise, the program does face challenges. To keep the program available to schools at little or no cost, organizers are constantly raising money, Talamas said.

Plus, some schools have had difficulty acquiring the computers needed to access online classroom lessons. When this occurs, the Securities Industry Association works with its local members to get computers for the classrooms, Talamas said.

CALENDAR

MARCH 15

Discussion: "Spy Hunters: The Women Who Caught Aldrich Ames." The International Spy Museum hosts Jeanne Vertefeuille and Sandy Grimes, former CIA operatives who helped capture the former operative turned traitor. Tickets are \$18 for Spy Ring members and \$23 general, and advance registration is required.

7 p.m.; International Spy Museum, 800 F St. NW; (202) 432-SEAT

MARCH 16

Lecture: "Women in Iran: Past, Present and Future." Azar Nafisi, who was born in Iran and now teaches culture and literature at Johns Hopkins University, will deliver this free talk.

12:30 p.m.; West Dining Room, James Madison Building, Library of Congress

MARCH 17

Lecture: "Vertical Imagination: Elevators and Escalators in Film." Susan Garfinkel, cultural historian at the Library of Congress, will speak about the role of vertical transportation in popular 20th century cinema. Admission is \$12 for museum members and \$16 general. Advance registration is required.

6:30 p.m.; National Building Museum, 401 F St. NW; (202) 272-2448

Send Calendar items to
Calendar@rollcall.com

Birthday Greetings

MARCH 18

Rep. Howard Coble (R-N.C.), 73
Rep. Karen McCarthy (D-Mo.), 57

MARCH 20

Rep. Gil Gutknecht (R-Minn.), 53

MARCH 21

Rep. Jim Matheson (D-Utah), 44

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HillTalk

Cartoonist to Discuss Book, Life at Library

Cartoonist Nicole Hollander, creator of the "Sylvia" comic strip, will be at the Library of Congress from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. today to deliver a lecture titled "Oh No, It's Monday, and I've Run Out of Ideas: A Cartoonist's Crisis."

During the talk, Hollander will discuss her new book "An ABC of Vice: An Insubstantial Women's Guide" — which she wrote in collaboration with the humorist and author Regina Barrecca — and will reflect on the creative process and her career. A collection of her work will be on view during the event.

"Sylvia" follows the trajectory and musings of a stay-at-home mom and advice columnist, known for her signature feather boa, slippers and ever-present cigarette. The strip appears in more than 80 newspapers, including The Boston Globe, The Detroit News and San Francisco Examiner.

The event, which will take place in the James Madison Building's Mumford Room, is free and open to the public. A book signing will follow the program.

CHAMPS Will Host Marketing Discussion

In an effort to help small businesses attract customers, the Capitol Hill Association of Merchants and Professionals will host a panel discussion on marketing and advertising at 8 a.m. Wednesday at Bullfeather's, 410 First St. SE.

Representatives from the Washington

Business Journal, Edge Advertising and Val-PAK will discuss the ins and outs of different advertising mediums, direct marketing and other strategies to help small businesses maximize their profits.

The cost is \$15 for CHAMPS members and includes breakfast. Interested individuals should RSVP by Tuesday to J.W. Arnold, Business Education and Programs chairman, at atjw@prdcnline.com.

SoberRide Offers Free Rides on St. Patrick's Day

The Washington Regional Alcohol Program again will offer free cab rides on St. Patrick's Day through its SoberRide program.

The group hopes to lower the number of alcohol-related accidents during the holiday by providing free taxi service over a 12-hour period in D.C.; Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland; and Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties in Virginia.

The program will be available from 4 p.m. Wednesday through 4 a.m. Thursday. Eleven Irish restaurants in the D.C. area, including The Dubliner Restaurant and Pub and Kelly's Irish Times on Capitol Hill, are sponsoring the program this year.

Area residents who are at least 21 years old can use the service by calling (800) 200-TAXI. AT&T Wireless users can call #TAXI. Passengers will be allowed up to \$50 in free fare.

— Bree Hocking
and Amy Carille